

Youth Recommendations for Improving School Conditions

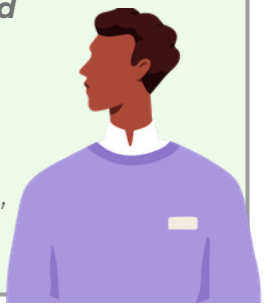
Healthy, Inclusive & Accessible School Food

Provide healthier, fresher, and better-tasting school meals. Students recommended adding more fruits, vegetables, healthy drinks and snacks, and a wider variety of meal choices. They also asked ACPS to use student surveys and input to learn what foods students enjoy and improve menus based on their feedback.

Sources: Jhamile Encinas, *Improving School Lunch*, 2026 and Qasim Stanikzaih, *Healthy School Lunch* 2026.

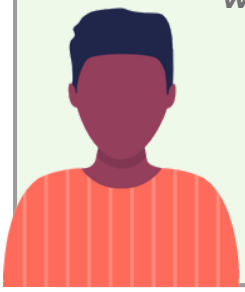
"My solution is to make school lunches healthier and tastier. Schools should add more fruits, vegetables, and healthy drinks."

~ Qasim Stanikzaih, 2026



Make cafeteria meals inclusive of students' religious and medical needs. Students recommended offering certified halal and gluten-free meals every day, providing allergy-friendly options, clearly labeling common allergens, working with certified vendors, training cafeteria staff in food allergies and religious dietary practices, and simplifying the accommodation process so religious restrictions do not require a doctor's signature. One report card also proposed a student menu advisory group that would test meals, gather feedback, and work directly with Nutrition Services to create more inclusive menus.

Sources: Leia Hubbard, *Inclusive School Meal Options at Alexandria City High School*, 2025; Sahil Jamil, *Adding Halal Food Options*, 2026; and Encinas, *Improving School Lunch*, 2026.



"Providing halal food would help make the school more inclusive and supportive for all students."

~ Sahil Jamil, 2026

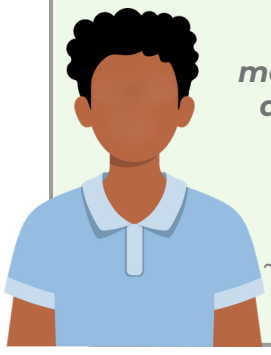
Increase access to free food throughout the school day. Students recommended free healthy snacks, grab-and-go snack stations, a free student pantry, more free-food events, and expanded meal programs for students who become hungry between meals or cannot afford food. They suggested using school funding and seeking donations or support from local food banks, stores, churches, and other community organizations.

Sources: Mahdi Payam, *Food Pantry for Students*, 2026; Jeffrey Quinteros Fuentes, *Free Snacks in School*, 2026; Barahona-Yanez, *Student Hunger at ACHS*, 2026; Daniel Rivera, *Food Costs and Food Access*, 2026; and Mahdi Payam, *Food Pantry for Students*, 2026.

"Providing free snacks at school could help students stay energized and ready to learn."

~ Jeffrey Quinteros Fuentes, 2026





"Some students struggle to afford meals, snacks, or food during school events because prices continue to rise."

~ Mahdi Payam, 2026